



ATF News

**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Dallas Field Division**

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ATF ENTERS INVESTIGATION INTO FIRE AT BARTLETT LUMBER AND HARDWARE

OKLAHOMA CITY - The National Response Team (NRT) of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), along with ATF special agents from Oklahoma City, have entered the investigation of a large commercial fire that occurred May 30 at the Bartlett Lumber and Hardware Center in Ponca City, Okla.

“The 22,000-square-foot center was a total loss with damages estimated at approximately \$2 million,” said Ken Chisholm, assistant special agent in charge of ATF Dallas Field Division. “ATF is assisting the Ponca City Fire Department, as well as the ATF Tulsa Arson Task Force which includes members of the Tulsa Fire Department, in the joint investigation.”

The NRT is being brought in to assist in the fire investigation because of the difficulties presented when investigating a fire of this size. The team will be on scene today. This investigation will be the 14th NRT activation for fiscal year 2008 and the 653rd activation since the inception of the program.

In 1978, ATF developed the NRT to assist federal, state and local investigators in meeting the challenges faced at the scenes of significant arson and explosives incidents. The NRT consists of four teams organized geographically to cover the United States. Each team can respond within 24 hours to assist state and local law enforcement/fire service personnel in onsite investigations.

In addition to investigating hundreds of large fire scenes, the NRT has also been activated to scenes such as the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Oklahoma City federal building bombing and the Sept. 11, 2001, Pentagon crash site, as well as blasts at explosives and ammunition manufacturing plants, legal fireworks factories and illegal explosive device manufacturing operations.

The teams are each composed of veteran special agents who have post-blast and fire origin-and-cause expertise; forensic chemists; explosives enforcement officers; fire

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protection engineers; accelerant detection canines; explosives detection canines; intelligence support, computer forensic support and audit support. The teams work alongside state and local officers in reconstructing the scene, identifying the seat of the blast or origin of the fire, conducting interviews, and sifting through debris to obtain evidence related to the bombing/arson.

Further complementing the team's efforts are technical, legal and intelligence advisers. Moreover, a fleet of fully equipped response vehicles strategically located throughout the United States is available to provide logistical support.

ATF is the federal agency with jurisdiction for investigating fires and crimes of arson. More information on ATF can be found at www.atf.gov.

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